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Afghanistan's Path to Reconstruction: Obstacles, Challenges, and Issues for Congress

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Summary

For the past 22 years, Afghanistan has been embroiled in conflict. Humanitarian assistance programs have been a key part of the overall multilateral effort to relieve human suffering and assist refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the post-September 11 environment, while actions are being taken to eliminate Taliban and Al Qaeda forces and others supporting terrorism, the needs have only become more urgent.

The case of Afghanistan may present a special category of crisis, in which the United States and others play a significant role in the war on terrorism while simultaneously providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. Moreover, the conditions in Afghanistan represent a challenging mix of infrastructure destruction, ongoing security concerns, and humanitarian needs requiring an immediate response. So far, the international community has recognized that large amounts of aid and resources will be required in the reconstruction effort. In addition, a long-term commitment will be necessary to ensure a stable, democratic Afghanistan emerges and will not fall prey to the twin evils of drugs and terrorism.

As the Afghan phase of the war is concluded, transitional and reconstruction assistance will move ahead. It is anticipated that Congress will examine the early progress of reconstruction efforts, aid priorities, and the long-term role to be played by the United States. It will likely also look at the contributions by and responsibilities of key allies partnering in the efforts within Afghanistan. The current operating environment reveals some of the key challenges that lie ahead such as security issues, population movements, food security, environment and infrastructure, health, and education. While the recent international donors conference indicated a strong willingness on the part of the international community to assist in the restoration of Afghanistan, it also revealed the cost could amount to more than \$15 billion over the next decade.

The many moving parts of the war on terrorism coupled with the uncertainty of developments within Afghanistan make long-term planning and exit strategies impossible at this stage. Still, of potential, immediate interest to Congress are security concerns, support of the interim administration, oversight and coordination of aid projects, and the plight of women and children.

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Afghanistan's Path to Reconstruction: Obstacles, Challenges, and Issues for Congress

Once hostilities end and the Afghan phase of the war on terrorism starts to wind down, reconstruction efforts will begin in earnest. International attention will likely turn to Afghanistan's short- and medium-term future, raising questions between the United States and its allies about division of labor, burdensharing, and exit strategies. It is anticipated that Congress will examine reconstruction efforts underway, aid priorities, long-term reconstruction proposals, and the implementation role to be played by the United States.

The Situation Before September 11, 2001

Even before the current crisis, Afghanistan had suffered twenty-two years of war, which included a long Soviet occupation, followed by civil war, and, beginning in 1996, harsh Taliban rule in most of the country.¹ With a devastated infrastructure and minimal government and social services, even basic health care and education were almost nonexistent. The Taliban leadership focused available resources largely on maintaining internal security and seeking to eliminate the last pockets of ethnic minority opposition in the North and Northeast. During this internal conflict, the Taliban placed restrictions on women working outside the home, further aggravating levels of poverty. These factors, in combination with a severe drought over the last three years, produced enormous human suffering in Afghanistan.

As of September 10, 2001, according to UNHCR, nearly four million Afghans (out of a total population of about 26 million) were refugees—two million in Pakistan, one and a half million in Iran, and the rest in Russia, India, the Central Asian Republics, Europe, and other places. In addition, as of September 10th, nearly one million other Afghans were internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted by drought and conflict.² At that time U.N. agencies were searching for ways to help five million of the most vulnerable Afghans, i.e., those in critical need of food and shelter. For IDPs this meant providing assistance close to where they lived to help them return to their own homes.

¹ For further information, please refer to Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns*, CRS Report RL30588, February 19, 2002.

² The conflicts in Afghanistan left approximately 2 million dead, 700,000 widows and orphans, and 1 million children born in refugee camps.

United Nations (U.N.) agencies such as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Program (WFP) and U.N. Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam and Save the Children have provided relief inside Afghanistan and in refugee camps in neighboring countries. The United States has been the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan through its contributions to the UNHCR, other agencies, and NGOs. From 1994 until just recently, the United States did not have a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Afghanistan.³ U.S. aid was provided mainly through U.N. agencies and NGOs. Via the WFP, the United States provided more than 80% of all food shipments to Afghanistan during the last fiscal year and more than 50% this year.⁴

Afghanistan Statistics

- The average life expectancy is about 45 years.
- Afghanistan has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world (1 woman in 12 dies during childbirth).
- Over a quarter of children die before reaching age five.
- Afghanistan has the lowest per person caloric intake in the world, and the highest per capita number of amputees.
- Despite these negative factors, a high fertility rate has caused its population growth rate to exceed 3%. In fact, over two decades of war and destruction, the Afghan population may have grown by a net 10 million, from approximately 16 million (according to a 1975 census) to the current estimate of 26 million.

The Situation After September 11, 2001

The humanitarian situation deteriorated even further following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Fears of U.S. reprisals against the Taliban triggered Afghan population flights from major cities both toward rural areas and the country's borders with Iran and Pakistan, despite the risk posed by land mines and unexploded munitions. Although some humanitarian efforts continued during the height of the anti-Taliban war, most international relief staff also left, making the provision of assistance more complicated. Still, food relief efforts can be credited with preventing a widely-feared famine over the winter.

The U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, "Operation Enduring Freedom," began on October 7. Within two months, by early

³ A USAID/DART office was set up in Islamabad in late December 2001.

⁴ See Situation Reports made available by the USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Central Asia Task Force on [<http://www.usaid.gov>].

December, many of the Taliban strongholds had collapsed. An interim government was formed on December 22, 2001. Led by Hamid Karzai, the new Afghan Interim Administration (AIA) began a transition to recovery and reconstruction.

Current Operating Environment

The humanitarian needs and support required for a recovery in Afghanistan must be understood in the context of the continuing vast numbers of refugees and IDPs, the variations among the regions in which they are located, and the political and security situation throughout the country. The collapsed infrastructure, rugged terrain, and extreme weather are significant factors with regard to access, food aid and logistics, and plans for reconstruction. The current operating environment is complex with a number of urgent challenges. Included in the next section are brief references to some initiatives under way.

Security

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), installed in Afghanistan in December, includes 4,500 peacekeepers drawn from 18 countries.⁵ It is led by the British (Operation Fingal) and only operates in Kabul and immediate surrounding areas.⁶ Its mission is to provide security to the capital, dispose of mines and unexploded ordinance, and eventually train soldiers for an Afghan army. The Kabul airport is open for military flights, and there are plans to accommodate civilian flights as well. Separate from ISAF, the total number of U.S. military personnel on the ground is roughly 5,200 with a focus on logistics, airlifts, and intelligence. U.S. troops and personnel, along with the British and other coalition troops, are continuing the war effort against Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants with actions such as Operation Anaconda in March 2002, which focused on areas in the east around the Shah-e-Kot valley.

Armed factions are feuding in different parts of the country. The goals of these warlords and other elements are to try to seize local power and territory and maintain profits from drugs and smuggling. IDPs caught in this situation, particularly minorities, face dire choices. If they decide to leave, they become vulnerable and homeless; if they stay, they risk harassment and violence and the possibility of U.S. bombing. Reports of rape, assault, and theft come from camps in different areas. Aid workers are also often placed in untenable positions. If they leave, they fear the IDPs will not survive; if they stay, they are unlikely to be able to prevent these atrocities. There is great concern about the security of aid workers delivering food and emergency care. Similar reports of theft and beatings have made drivers wary and highlighted the fragile environment under which humanitarian assistance is operating. Stolen food has been distributed to local residents and military units.

⁵ Approximately 1,800 of the peacekeepers are UK personnel. See Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom: [<http://www.mod.uk>].

⁶ It is expected that the follow-on peacekeeping force will be under Turkish command.

Clearly related to security are questions concerning the effectiveness of the AIA in administering the government, facilitating the implementation of recovery initiatives, and addressing broader concerns of security and terrorism throughout Afghanistan. The AIA faces threats to security from three potential directions. First, the country's lack of resources have encouraged a thriving drug trade. Before the Taliban, Afghanistan's major export was opium. It produced 75% of the world supply. Under the Taliban, which enforced a ban on opium cultivation in 1999, according to some estimates, opium poppy cultivation dropped from 3,000 tons to 200 tons. However, these numbers are deceiving. It is believed that drugs continued to be a lucrative source of income both for the Taliban and their opponents because large stockpiles built up under Taliban rule, which may well have been intended for the world market, were held back as supply exceeded demand and caused a depression in price. Indeed, this spring may see the largest poppy crop in recent years. Controlling the drug trade is a huge challenge in a country with few other resources and the incentive of profits from heroin on the world market. While the Karzai-led interim government has ordered a ban on the production, use, and trafficking of all drugs, the government has little or no power of enforcement. Sources report a recent increase in cultivation linked to lawlessness and banditry on the one hand, and the great need among farmers for some form of livelihood on the other.

Second, former combatants can have a direct impact on humanitarian assistance and recovery efforts. If local struggles for power continue to prevent refugees and IDPs from returning to their homes, this will severely hamper any recovery efforts. Third, Afghanistan's neighbors—Pakistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan—can also play key roles, depending on whether or not they provide support to these local contenders for power.

Population Movements

Population movements continue in and out of and within Afghanistan. It is estimated that there are 3.7 million refugees, mostly in Iran and Pakistan. The approximate number of IDPs remaining to date is 1.3 million. The total number of people requiring relocation assistance is therefore around 5 million. In coordination with government initiatives, UNHCR has set up voluntary return programs for refugees. These Tripartite Agreements on repatriation between UNHCR, Afghanistan, and the governments of Pakistan and Iran, respectively, outline the framework for the voluntary return of Afghan refugees. UNHCR reports that since March 1, nearly 150,000 Afghan refugees have repatriated from Pakistan, and more than 3,800 IDPs have returned to their homes. UNHCR plans to begin assisting refugees in Iran at the beginning of April, where eight registration centers have already been established.

However, new waves of Afghan refugees are causing some alarm. While tens of thousands have returned home, still other refugees have fled to Pakistan because of crime, fighting, and lack of food. With no sustainable livelihood, many of these refugees are forced to seek assistance.

UNHCR expects to repatriate 800,000 refugees from Pakistan and Iran and 400,000 IDPs this year. It will probably take several years for returns to be completed, security permitting. Given the conditions in Afghanistan, the

organizations coordinating aid to Afghanistan and the international community may be forced to rethink the timetable for repatriation of refugees and return of IDPs. Longer-term care in refugee camps and other measures may be required to allow for recovery to take hold while providing life-saving measures in the form of food, security, shelter, and basic medical care.

Food Security

Afghanistan has had three years of drought, although there have been periods of precipitation in different parts of the country. A USAID-funded assessment indicates that the drought can be expected to last another 12-18 months. In the meantime, rain and snow have reduced access to certain areas, caused housing problems at some shelters and camps, and increased assistance and protection needs. The weather, like the terrain, is varied and harsh and creates “pockets of need” which are difficult to reach by relief agencies.

Food insecurity is relatively less severe but likely to continue in southern Afghanistan, whereas in the “hunger belt” in the north and north east, food shortages and distribution problems are exacerbating already difficult conditions. This in turn is worsening existing ethnic tensions between the Pashtuns and either Uzbeks or Tajiks and encouraging further population movements to southern Afghanistan or across the border to Pakistan.

The U.S. strategy has been to move as much food as possible into villages where people reside. In order to avoid diversion and theft of commodities, most food has been stored in bordering countries and moved into Afghanistan by various means, including trucks, pack animals, and airdrops. Free distribution and food-for-work programs direct the efforts of able-bodied recipients into community development projects. Recently the WFP began rapid helicopter deliveries in highly inaccessible areas. Between October and mid February, the WFP delivered 322,500 tons of food. NGOs report that they have delivered 263,700 tons to six million people.

Environment and Infrastructure

Afghanistan’s environment has also been severely compromised by the war and drought. The drought will have direct bearing not only on the upcoming planting season, livestock production, and agricultural recovery, but more short-term concerns as well. An inadequate supply of water has an impact on basic human needs, such as health, consumption, and shelter (building brick houses requires water). Dried-up wells, poor irrigation practices, and lack of overall water management systems are critical factors as Afghanistan enters its fourth year of drought. Deforestation, lack of energy, and poor infrastructure, including roads and bridges, are also significant factors that present formidable obstacles to reconstruction.

Almost every basic humanitarian need has an environmental component that will continue to be important for the foreseeable future and will require careful planning in the transition to reconstruction. For example, the restoration of electric power either could involve rebuilding conventional, dirty diesel and oil power plants or constructing distributed, clean micro turbines to provide electricity and heat, and the

development of wind and solar energy. The provision of clean water could be improved with the reconstruction of wells, development of efficient irrigation systems, and monitoring of water quality. Innovative sanitation and waste treatment facilities could be designed to reduce risks to human health and ultimately destruction to the environment.

Land Mines

Land mines remain a huge problem throughout Afghanistan. Afghanistan is believed to have one of the worst mine and unexploded ordnance problems in the world, with 5-7 million still littered about the country. The Land Mine Monitor estimates that of 724 million square meters of contaminated land, over half, 344 million square meters is classified as high-priority land for agriculture. With over 80% of the Afghan population relying on agriculture for its livelihood, this is a substantial obstacle not only to refugee and IDP returns, but to the basic recovery and reconstruction plans as well.

Health Sector

The World Health Organization (WHO), regional health officials, health-related UN agencies, and key NGOs are assisting the Afghan Ministry of Health and discussing ways to rebuild the almost non-existent public health services. Issues to be covered range from the provision of quality health care, increasing the supply of pharmaceuticals, to health care access for millions of Afghans. A meeting is planned in March to outline an agenda for reconstruction of the health sector. There have been recent reports of outbreaks of influenza and scurvy in several parts of Afghanistan; security concerns have prevented access to some of the areas in question. The joint UNHCR/WHO campaign has immunized 1.5 million children against measles since the beginning of January. Tuberculosis is also considered to be a growing problem. Significant health impacts which are symptoms of much larger problems include heroin addiction and landmine injuries.

Education and Community Development

The education system, particularly for women and girls, requires a great deal of assistance if schools are to function with even the most basic infrastructure and tools in the upcoming school year. USAID is providing 4 million textbooks over the next few weeks. Other projects are underway to rebuild schools. An assessment is being conducted by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) to design a strategy for building political stability, particularly through community-based programming. In addition, through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the Afghanistan Emergency Information Project provides a daily humanitarian information bulletin for radio broadcast. Up to 30,000 radios are being distributed to vulnerable segments of the Afghan population. An agreement with Voice of America is expanding the project's regional capacity and increasing its special broadcasts on important information pertaining to the relief effort.

The International Response

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance

According to USAID, during FY2001 the U.S. government provided \$183 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan ranging from airlifts of tents and blankets to assistance with polio eradication, from tons of wheat to crop substitution assistance for poppy growers. On October 4, 2001, President Bush announced that the United States would provide \$320 million for FY2002 in U.S. humanitarian assistance to Afghans both inside and outside Afghanistan's borders. Multiple U.S. agencies are providing some form of humanitarian assistance, including USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), USAID/Food For Peace (FFP), Democracy & Governance (USAID/DG), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM), Department of State's Demining Program, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Defense (DOD).

U.S. humanitarian assistance covers a wide variety of aid, services, and projects. Thus far, the United States has provided over \$300 million in FY2002 Afghan humanitarian assistance directly through government agencies or as a result of grants to international organizations and NGOs.⁷ With the UNDP Trust Fund, support is being provided to the operations and activities of the AIA. Humanitarian assistance from other countries has also been forthcoming since October 2001. While exact figures are difficult to ascertain, both bilateral and multilateral donors have made contributions toward immediate and transitional assistance programs.

Transitional Assistance and Reconstruction

International Conference on Reconstruction. UNDP and World Bank officials estimate that the reconstruction of Afghanistan will require \$1.7 billion in the first year, \$10 billion over 5 years, and \$15 billion in the next decade. Others argue these numbers may be low, and put the overall cost at closer to \$30 billion.

The International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in Tokyo on January 21 and 22, 2002⁸ gave the AIA a chance to demonstrate its commitment to the next phase of Afghanistan's recovery and the international donor community an opportunity to come together and formally demonstrate support for this initiative. The sixty-one countries and twenty-one international organizations

⁷ According to Andrew Natsios, Administrator, USAID, and witness to the House International Relations Committee Hearing on March 14, 2002, \$83.9 million has come from OFDA, \$75 million from Food for Peace, and \$14.2 is from OTI. In addition to humanitarian assistance, \$167 million is being put towards recovery and reconstruction initiatives.

⁸ The Asian Development Bank, the UNDP and the World Bank convened a Ministerial Meeting to conduct a preliminary needs assessment for external funding required to assist Afghanistan in its reconstruction efforts.

represented pledged \$1.8 billion for 2002. The U.S. government alone pledged \$297 million.⁹ The cumulative total was \$4.5 billion, with some states making pledges over multiple years and commitments of different time frames. Some countries offered support in kind but with no monetary value. See table below.

Table 1. Pledges from the Tokyo Reconstruction Conference
(U.S. \$ - millions)

Country	Pledge	Time Frame
European Union	495	in the first year
India	100	line of credit
Iran	560	over the next 5 years
Japan	500	over the next 2.5 years
Pakistan	100	over 5 years
Saudi Arabia	220	over 3 years
South Korea	45	over the next 2.5 years
United Kingdom	86	in 2002
United States	297	over the next year

Source: *The New York Times*, January 22, 2002.

The U.S. contribution is just under 25%, about on par with the U.S. share of funding in the United Nations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).¹⁰ The United States hopes that other nations will carry a greater portion of the costs for reconstruction and peacekeeping since it has paid for most of the military campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. By comparison, the EU pledged the euro equivalent of \$495 million for 2002, which comes to nearly 30% of the assessed need and amount pledged at the conference. Within this pledge the European Commission recently approved an Initial Recovery Program for Afghanistan.

U.S. Reconstruction Assistance. The U.S. pledge to assist the people of Afghanistan in 2002 is broken down as follows:

⁹ Of the amount pledged by the United States, much of the money was already available and drawn from existing funds. However, a FY2002 supplemental is expected to substantially increase amounts allocated to Afghanistan's relief and recovery.

¹⁰ By contrast, in Kosovo, Congress capped U.S. reconstruction aid to 15 % of donor pledges.

Table 2. U.S. Programs to Assist the People of Afghanistan
(U.S. \$ - millions)

Account	Amount	Purpose
Development Assistance/ Child Survival/Health	12	Food security and health assistance and education
International Disaster Assistance	72	Incentives for stability
Office of Transition Initiatives	6	Community development; quick impact projects
PL 480 - Title II (food)	77	Relief and recovery
416 (b)	44.9	Food for relief and recovery
Population, Refugees, Migration	52.6	Migration/refugee assistance
Economic Support Funds	17.25	Development assistance
Other sectors	8	Counternarcotics
Other sectors	7	Humanitarian demining ¹¹
Total	296.75	

Source: The U.S. Department of State, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, January 28, 2002

It is important to note that the U.S. allocation covers humanitarian needs (food relief, refugee assistance) and transition-to-reconstruction initiatives (development assistance, community programs, quick impact projects). Assistance requirements cover a wide range of tasks due to the extreme conditions and complexity of the operating environment in Afghanistan. These initiatives must be viewed along parallel, but integrated, tracks rather than the more usual progression over time from one stage to another.

According to the State Department, there will also be a \$50 million line of credit to finance U.S. projects through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. The Department of Labor will also make available \$3 million to implement job programs.

In addition, the United States has freed up assets frozen when the Taliban regime was in power and made them available to the AIA. Through the Federal Reserve Bank of New York the Central Bank of Afghanistan already has access to \$193 million worth of gold and \$24.9 million in cash. There is an additional \$25 million in Afghan Central Bank Funds held in other accounts; \$23 million held by the International Transport Association (for overflights of Afghanistan), and \$1.3 million from Ariana Afghan Airlines.

¹¹ Donors have pledged \$60 million for humanitarian demining (from Tokyo and before). The United States is putting up \$7 million, Japan \$18.2 million and the EU \$9.3 million. U.S. government sources say that demining over seven years will cost approximately \$670 million.

U.S. Legislation. In December 2001, H.R. 3427, to provide assistance for the relief and reconstruction of Afghanistan, and for other purposes, was referred to the House Committee on International Relations. A similar bill, S.1880, was introduced in the Senate and referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002, legislation referred to the House Committee on International Relations (H.R. 3944), would provide \$1.05 billion of reconstruction aid to Afghanistan over four years. It focuses on creating a stable environment for Afghanistan, addressing such issues as counternarcotics, terrorism, and enforcement, the coordination of U.S. efforts, given its multiple-agency involvement, and humanitarian and relief assistance. The bill was introduced on March 14 by Committee Chairman Henry Hyde and later co-sponsored with Ranking Member Tom Lantos, and Middle East Subcommittee Chairman Benjamin Gilman and Ranking Democrat Gary Ackerman. The Committee approved the bill by voice vote following markup on March 20, 2002.

Issues for Congress

Security

If reconstruction is to be a success, most observers believe it must occur in a secure environment without threat to the new government and initiatives on the ground. As U.S. troops make headway on finishing the Afghan phase of the war, there are many questions about ensuring a secure environment for reconstruction. Can peace occur without U.S. involvement in the peacekeeping effort? How involved will the U.S. troops be in assembling and training an Afghan army? What role should the United States play in drug enforcement and the war on terrorism inside Afghanistan?

Many believe a peacekeeping force is essential and the United States must be part of such a force. So far, the Bush Administration maintains that it will not take part in a peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. However, the U.N. has called for more foreign troops to disarm various groups and control warlords. The upsurge in conflict in early March suggests the possibility that the U.S. decision may be reconsidered. Under the current mandate, peacekeepers are in Kabul and have no impact outside the capital. Some argue that the ISAF is too small and too limited to be effective. Amid discussion about the type of peacekeeping force required has been the question of how long peacekeepers will be required to stay.

Part of the current security plan includes the set up of an Afghan army for border control and stability. Under consideration is how such an army is to be assembled, which armed forces would be involved in its training, and how it would work with the international forces already in place. A Training Task Force (made up of roughly 150 Special Forces troops plus any troops contributed by allied nations) may begin training a new Afghan national army beginning as soon as May 2002. Apart from preparation for combat and border patrols, the Afghan forces would eventually be

instructed on a set of more complex issues—respect for human rights, loyalty to government, and civilian-military affairs.¹²

Finally, there are the twin evils of drugs and terrorism, inextricably linked, but requiring different forms of intervention and enforcement. Moreover, in addition to cracking down on the problem itself, alternative forms of livelihood are critical, such as crop substitution, community projects, and other programs to benefit those directly involved in these activities.

Interim Administration

Critical to Afghanistan's recovery in the short term and stability in the long term is the credibility and effective functioning of its government. In a few months the interim Afghan government is scheduled to face another transition. King Zahir Shah is to open the *loya jirga*, which will choose a new government to run Afghanistan for the next two years until a new constitution is drafted and elections are held. What role will the United States play in helping to build administrative capacity in the form of a national government and institutional development? What is the United States currently doing to help the Afghan government function and prepare for its next phase?

Oversight and Coordination of Aid Projects

In order to keep the support of the international community, reconstruction efforts need to demonstrate the effective use of funds and their distribution. What is the United States doing to make sure aid is being spent wisely? What role is the United States playing to facilitate international collaboration on oversight and coordination of aid projects? How is the United States coordinating its various agencies participating in reconstruction efforts?

From coordination mechanisms to a system of accountability, future donations depend on the way in which current funds are used and whether they reach those for whom they are intended. The work of the U.N. (in particular UNDP), other international organizations, NGOs, and governments will be critical. The number of international actors on the ground create some concerns about aid assistance and how projects will be managed and coordinated. The United States has made a substantial pledge to Afghanistan, but its role in the overall aid coordination effort is less clear.

Few rules exist about how the money is to be spent. Moreover, the lack of experience by the AIA coupled with its many competing priorities (not least of which is that a financial infrastructure is not yet in place), mean that assistance and guidance on monetary matters (including agreements with lenders and contributions by donors) by the international community remain critical.

A number of U.S. agencies are involved in the relief and recovery effort in Afghanistan. A single coordinator of U.S. assistance has not been appointed to spearhead the initiatives underway. While systems have been put in place in the field

¹² *The New York Times*, March 26, 2002 Section A, Page 12, Column 6.

to better coordinate day-to-day activities under the U.S. Ambassador, there is no single person coordinating U.S. policy from Washington, DC.

Aid Priorities

So far, there is little development-type aid in the U.S. pledge, although some is focused on quick impact programs, long-term agriculture, women and children, and education. Where should the United States concentrate its aid priorities and efforts? With what level and mix of assistance? What is the Bush Administration's objective and strategy? Will Congress begin to earmark sectors and, if so, based upon what priorities?

Women and Children

The Taliban treatment of women and restrictions it imposed not only severely curtailed the work force, but reduced women's basic rights, education, and access to health. On December 12, 2001 Congress passed the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act of 2001 (S. 1573, P.L. 107-81) to address some of these concerns. How much impact will this legislation have on reconstruction initiatives specifically focused on women and children? To what extent will their needs be a primary point of focus in aid distribution and the recovery effort? What are the barriers to the implementation of women's projects?

Collateral Damage

In recent months claims of erroneous bombing targets have raised the question of victim compensation and U.S. responsibility and also highlighted the difficulty of intelligence gathering and security problems on the ground. Although statutes and legislation exist to protect victims of war, these are typically worked out on a case-by-case basis. The issue is blurred by the recognition that the end result may not be a matter of simple human error, but rather a complex combination of factors for which it is more difficult to determine responsibility. Collateral damage includes civilian losses, considered to be a by-product of war, despite efforts to minimize innocent civilian casualties. Extensive press coverage and a series of claims of mistaken targets have made this a point of concern in recent weeks. Should legislation be developed specifically for Afghan citizens who are victims of collateral damage?